Kedesh 2006
Final Report for Trenches CA9.5 and CB1.5
By:
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Introduction:
During the 2006 season at Tel Kedesh, the north-eastern quadrant of the 10m x 10m CA9.5 trench was excavated. Likewise, the contiguous south-eastern quadrant of the 10m x 10m CB1.5 was reopened and further excavations were performed. Excavations were begun May 24th, 2006 in CA9.5 and finished in CB1.5 on July 13th, 2006, with some residual time taken in order to clean for pictures.

The purpose in excavating these two trenches was to try and find good Persian levels inside the Large Administrative Building, which forms the focus of the Tel Kedesh Project. These two squares were chosen because their location on the lower southern edge of the Tel made it likely that earlier material lay near to the present-day surface.

This purpose was partially successful. Several earlier walls and discrete filling events were uncovered in both squares. However, both squares were also heavily disturbed by later disruptions, either robbing activities in the case of CA9.5, or post excavation contamination in the case of CB1.5, which hampered the attempt to find good Persian levels. Still, CA9.5 did have two fragments of flooring which seal Persian fills beneath.

The trenches CA9.5 and CB1.5 were dug by a crew ranging between four and five members. These members included one to two supervisors, an assistant supervisor, and two Druze workers.

Trench CA9.5, Phasing and Loci:
Post Building Phase:
Several loci from CA9.5 can be dated to periods following the use and abandonment of the Large Administrative Building. The first of these was the dark, organic topsoil (CA95011) which covered the entirety of the square and which contained material up to modern date. Immediately below this locus, there was an area of subsoil (CA95012), which was less organic and contained a fair amount of rubble. This subsoil covered most of the trench, except on the eastern edge where the earlier wall (CA95001) was uncovered. The LDM for the subsoil was Early Roman, though most of the material seems to have been Hellenistic.

The major feature of this post building phase is a very large robbing trench (CA95015) which runs north-south the length of the trench, along a line just west of the trench’s centerline. This trench was more than a meter and a half deep, and it neatly bisected the trench into eastern and western sections. In the process, this robbing trench managed to disrupt a number of earlier walls, including walls CA95003, CA95005, CA95006, and CA95007. The soil of this locus was characterized by the consistent presence of rubble. The LDM, which was found at the bottom of the locus, was a Kifer Hananyah 4A rim fragment.

Hellenistic Phase:
Due to the disruptions, the evidence for activity in the square during the Hellenistic Period is fairly limited. Along the south, the stub of an east-west wall
shallow wheel ridging. This episode is specifically concentrated in disruptions along the earlier north-south wall CA95008.

The Earlier Persian Phase:
There is also evidence for an earlier Persian phase in the square. The prime evidence is that CA95006 sits atop yet another wall on the same line (CA95010) which it uses as a foundation. CA95010 extends fairly deep for a single foundation, however, and it does not bond with the foundation of CA95001 which do not extend as far down. Two other walls, CA95007 and CA95008 may also belong to this phase. Both run north south roughly on line with the robbing trench CA95015 and both have been disrupted by this episode or CA95019. In the case of CA95008, nothing more than one course remains. The disruption caused by the earlier robbing episode (CA95019) also indicates that CA95008 went out of use by the later phase of the Persian Period. Both abut with CA95010, but they are not bonded to it. Both are also constructed of faces of larger unknown or roughly-hewn rubble sandwiching cores of smaller rubble and showing no evidence for the large pier-as-header construction which characterizes CA95001 and CA95006.

There is also a fill (CA95020) which might date to this phase. This fill runs the length of the square from CA95006 northwards to the northern edge, and running as far west as CA95008. It underlies both CA95016 and CA95018. The LDM of this fill was a Persian folded lamp fragment, though most of the material appears to have been earlier, namely from the Iron Age.

The Pre-Persian Phase:
Wall CA95009 was uncovered at the very bottom of the square. It runs north-south at an odd angle to all the other walls in the square. It directly underlies CA95010 and CA95020 and runs beneath CA95008, which is peastalled on soil above it. CA95009 is also built of smaller stones than are found in the other walls. It is likely, therefore, that CA95009 predates the Persian period and the building itself.

Trench CBI.5:
As compared to CA9.5, only a little work was done in the previously excavated CB1.5 towards the end of the excavation season. This work was concentrated to the north and south of the large wall east-west wall CBI5002 which had been discovered in the previous season. Due to the brevity of work and later contamination, no clear picture of the phasing was possible. Still some discrete and datable loci were uncovered.

To the south of CBI5002, cleaning revealed the extent of a wall whose outer face had been rendered visible at the end of pervious season. This wall was later given the locus of CBI5018. It consisted of two faces of larger unknown stones sandwiching a core of smaller unknown rocks running vaguely north-south in rough line with the wall CA95008 to the south with which it doesn’t connect due to the earlier robbing event CA95019. The construction techniques of both walls are consistent the one with the other.

To the west of CBI5018 and the south of CBI5002, a locus of winter-wash contaminated soil was removed as CBI5014. This locus was found to have a modern roof tile for an LDM. Below this soil, the top of another wall stub (CBI5012) was uncovered.
(CA95005) was probably Hellenistic in date as it was in line with a Hellenistic wall, thus far the southernmost wall of the building, found in a trench further west. Both walls were of similar size and construction. CA95005 was removed, but little was found to date it concretely.

Likewise, in the north-west corner of the square, a east-west store wall (CA95003) was uncovered which was found fairly high as compared to other walls. This wall may also date to the Hellenistic Period. However, there is no directly datable evidence associated with the wall, and it could date very well to the Persian Period as well.

Along the western bank, the fill CA95017 has also been dated to the Hellenistic Period. This fill ran from the south of CA95003 to the southern wall line. It is differentiated from the later robbing trench by the clayish consistency of the soil and the general. The LDM was some Middle Hellenistic fine ware sherds. This fill does not appear to have been occupation related, as there was no evidence for a floor in the trench or in the bank. Instead CA95017 may have something to do with Hellenistic building activity, such as the construction of CA95005 and/or CA95003.

Furthermore, two robbing pits (CA95013 and CA95014) were uncovered along the top of the north-south wall (CA95001) which had Hellenistic LDMs (a Black Slip Pseudoceasar base and a Local Fine fishplate base respectively), but their positions stop this wall, especially in the case of the southern one (CA95014) which would have disrupted the Hellenistic southern outer wall (CA95005) might indicate that they date in fact to the abandonment of the building.

The Later Persian Phase:

While the Hellenistic Period remains were somewhat limited, those of the Persian period were more robust, though still disrupted by later robbing activities. For the first time, floors, albeit extremely fragmentary, were uncovered. The first fragment (CA95002) was uncovered up against the wall CA95001 in the north-west quarter of the square. It was the largest of the fragments, measuring around 2.1 x 1.2 meters, and consisted of lime, gravel and soil mixed together and compacted. The very surface of this hill had a Hellenistic LDM (Hellenistic cookware), but its nature and all the fill directly beneath it (CA95016) were solidly Persian in date. To the south of CA95003, on the other side of the robbing trench was the much smaller floor fragment CA95004 which also had a Persian LDM (Persian cookware).

The walls CA95002, which runs north-south along the eastern edge of the square, and CA95006, which runs east-west along the southern edge, are also likely Persian. Both walls bond together in the south-eastern corner of the square. Both are fairly wide and constructed with large piers laid as headers. Their date is gathered from the connection between the dated deposit of CA95002 and CA95001. There is also an area of fill lying to the south of CA95002, in the corner formed by CA95001 and CA95006, which also has a Persian LDM (Persian lamp). This locus (CA95018) is differentiated from either the floor and fills to the north or the robbing trench to the west by its general dearth of lime or rubble.

At the very bottom of the Early Roman robbing trench, there was evidence for an earlier robbing episode (CA95019) which has a LDM of a 4th century cookpot with
This wall was about as thick as CB15018 but was constructed in a different manner than the other wall. CB15012 was constructed of two faces of extremely large stones which met more or less in the centre with little or no room for the normal smaller stone core. The line of this wall was also askew from the lines of the other two walls at a significant angle. This all indicates that the wall is probably earlier than the other two, possibly Iron Age remnant.

To the north of CB15002, a spur of plaster floor emerging from the western bulk and the soil beneath, which had been focussed in the previous season but left in place, was removed as part of the original locus (CB15006). Below this and extending along the length of CB15002, the rest of the material, which had been exposed to the elements since the last excavation season, was removed as CB15015. Its LDM was a fragment of Early Roman cooking ware.

Below this exposed material, two loci were uncovered. The first consisted of a large mass of lime and chipped stone compacted with a little bit of soil. This chipped stone mass (CB15013) was originally though to be a floor, but its large thickness (c. 40cm) makes this unlikely. Instead, it may have been the fill of a pit of unknown purpose. The LDM of this chipped stone mass was a fragment from a flat bottom Hellenistic casserole, which lay at the very bottom, though most of the other material appears to have been earlier.

The second locus in this northern area consisted of the material which surrounded the sides of the chipped stone mass. This material (CB15016) was made up of soil with a very small amount of stones within the matrix. The LDM of this locus was some fragments of Persian cooking ware.

A final locus was dug within CB1.5. This locus was the only one in the eastern half of the trench and consisted of some soil taken from beneath a very large stone left lying from the previous season. This locus was termed CB15017 and had an LDM of a Persian folded lamp.

Concluding Remarks:

The excavations of CA9.5 and CB1.5 have both provided evidence for Persian phases of the Large Administrative building as well as the earlier Iron Age structures which preceded it. Trench CA9.5 specifically has provided evidence for the possibility of multiple Persian building phases of the Large Administrative building, while at the same time indicating the presence of a significantly different structure on the spot prior to that. At the same time, however, these two trenches have also highlighted the problems in obtaining a coherent picture of these earlier phases in this particular area of the Tel, due in large part to later disturbances, such as large robbing trenches.

Total Amount of Pottery Recovered: 514.325 kg.